



NEWS

JB Pritzker, Governor

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Illinois Department of Labor Urges Illinois Drivers to Be Careful During Hectic Spring Planting

Farm Implements Are Taking to the Fields via the State's Roadways

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois is home to 27 million acres of prime farmland, and as the spring temperatures warm, farmers will be taking their implements and heading to the fields across the state. Drivers and farmers alike are urged to be extra cautious during the hectic planting season.

“Agricultural commodities generate more than \$19 billion annually to Illinois’ economy, and that translates to a lot of activity in the fields this time of year. It’s a time for all of us to be aware that large farm machinery is on the roads and to be aware and patient when we encounter them,” **said Michael Kleinik, director of the Illinois Department of Labor.** “Everyone practicing patience and common sense will make for not only a productive planting season but also a safer one.”

Vehicle safety is an especially important focus this time of year. Tractor overturns are the leading cause of fatalities in the agriculture industry, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. These accidents result in about 130 deaths each year nationwide.

Speed, impatience, and left-hand turns are the leading causes of many accidents involving farm machinery.

While tractor roll-over accidents most often occur on the farm, roadways pose a major safety hazard. Too often a vehicle attempting to pass causes a collision before the tractor or farm implement can finish a left-hand turn. Some collisions occur simply because the driver fails to reduce speed for the slower moving farm implement.

Drivers should take precautions as they approach farm vehicles on the road as operators have limited visibility to the rear. Anyone passing such a vehicle needs to use extreme caution.

Visibility is also a key to safety on the roads. All agricultural vehicles using the public roadways must display the fluorescent orange Slow Moving Vehicle triangle. Additionally, tractors and other self-powered farm vehicles must have proper lighting. According to Illinois law:

- Lighting is required from 30 minutes before sunset to 30 minutes after sunrise.
- There should be two white lamps on the front of the vehicle, visible from at least 1000 feet to the front of the vehicle.
- There should be two red lamps on the rear of the vehicle, visible from at least 1000 feet to the rear of the vehicle.
- There should be at least one flashing amber signal lamp on the rear of the vehicle, mounted as high as possible and visible from at least 500 feet, which can be used during daylight as well.

Modern farm equipment provides effective safety devices if they are used properly. Death and serious injury from tractor roll overs can be prevented by roll-over protection structures – a roll bar or cage designed to provide a safe space around the driver. But too often workers fail to use a vital part of this safety device – a safety belt.

Likewise, safety experts caution farm workers not to ignore their own needs while rushing to get the spring crop planted. Three words sum up good safety protocol – Rest. Nutrition. Hydration. Taking the time to eat, stretch your legs and keep hydrated can make a big difference in safety.